

LATTE

QUARTERLY

The logo consists of a large, stylized 'L' followed by a 'Q' that contains a soccer ball pattern. The 'L' and 'Q' are rendered in a bold, blocky font with a slight shadow effect.

Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training... Everything FM | **Issue Three**

Editor's Note

Brazil, a place scouted by many, but a league few Football Manager fans are familiar with. In days gone by, many Brazilian players were only seen on the international stage, dazzling fans every few years. In these times, fans can see the best exports each week for their clubs or find footage of the native league online. Ask any casual FMer where they should scout for the next great Newgen and they would likely include Brazil into their search. The players have often been filled with promise and flair, but what is it like to manage the talent or within the country? The Latte Quarterly team gives insight. Joining three LQ members are guest writers SoggPlaysFM and Jamie Tarrant, both with excellent topics to bring and help make issue three one of the best.

LQ was born from four FM minds coming together, but what happens when two collaborate on one piece? FMAdventure and FMGrasshopper test that as they recreate a classic Brazil side with updated tactics. Will a World Cup winning side be able to compete in the modern era?

If you're like me, you may have contemplated going to Brazil either for a change of scene or to get the Newgens at source. Also, if you're like me you may not have had that inspiration to take the plunge. Fear not, FMSamo gives us a Brazilian reasons why we should manage there.

Guest writers are always welcome to submit to LQ and SoggPlaysFM came to talk about a problem many Brazilian players don't have, finding the net. Plying his virtual trade in South America, Sogg was finding his strikers hit a dry spell, so chose that as a subject to explore. A struggle we can all relate to I'm sure.

Last but not least, if you've been playing Football, or Championship Manager for as long as Jamie, you may have had the opportunity to play with a few Brazilian players. His entertaining and personal piece can resonate with many fans of the game who have spent over half their lives playing.

So settle in and take some time to enjoy Latte Quarterly, and if you feel inspired, get in touch.

AccordingtoFM

LQ Issue Three:

Brazil 2002 in 2022

By FMAdventure and FMGrasshopper

A Brazilian Reasons to Go

By FMSamo

Solving Strikers

By SoggPlaysFM

My Marriage with FM

By Jamie Tarrant

Brazil 2002 in 2022

By FMAdventure and FMGrasshopper

Intro - FMAdventure

The concept of replicating historical teams in current editions of Football Manager is by no means a new idea, whether that is by using a retro database or attempting to recreate an iconic tactical style from days gone by. What FM Grasshopper & I have decided to do in the following article is to take an historical team and see how they would fit into the style of play utilised by their modern-day counterpart.



Why Brazil 2002?

There is a certain allure about the 2002 World Cup for me. It is the first World Cup that I was old enough to watch from start to finish, the Korea-Japan marketing was so inviting and the tournament had so many memorable moments on and off the pitch.

Brazil's squad for 2002 had football fans spoilt but I don't think we truly appreciated it at the time.

Dida was in the midst of a false passport scandal while Rogério Ceni was beginning to build his reputation as a goalscoring goalkeeper. Both of them were behind Marcos in the pecking order, a player most Europeans could be forgiven for not knowing a lot about before his 2002 heroics.

The Seleção had the frightening pace of Cafu and Roberto Carlos on opposing flanks with a back three of Lúcio, Roque Júnior and Edmílson who were beginning to find their feet after moves to Bayer Leverkusen, AC Milan and Lyon respectively.

Brazil had, what would turn out to be, an embarrassment of riches in the middle of the

pitch. Middlesbrough's Juninho eventually gave way in his midfield partnership to allow the Gilberto Silva/Kléber dynamic to flourish – this before their future moves to England. A young Kaká was not quite ready to burst onto the footballing scene just yet but the São Paulo playmaker did get a slight taste of the game's biggest stage in a substitute appearance against Costa Rica.

If the reigning World Champions were well equipped in midfield then you could consider their attack to be total overkill. Denílson was a more than able deputy for the famous front three. The frizzy-haired, ever-smiling Ronaldinho embodied the concept of Samba as he danced across the Asian turf, long before he would grace the Paraguayan prison yard. Rivaldo briefly played pantomime villain with his theatrics in the opening fixture against Turkey but went on to score five goals in his opening five games. Spearheading the attack, El Fenomeno scored in all but one of his country's matches on his way to claiming the coveted Golden Shoe with 8 goals.



Brazil 2002

Recreating Brazil

How we have replicated this amazing Brazil side is quite simple. Using the attributes from Championship Manager 01/02, we have transposed these players into Football Manager 20 using the pre-game editor. Where possible this has been as simple as copying over attribute values for each of the 23-man squad from Korea-Japan 2002. For any missing attributes (as attributes have developed and changed over time) and player traits we have used our knowledge of the players to fill the gaps.

Tactics - FMGrasshopper

FM Adventure is always the innovator, his remit to me was not simply a tactical replication...but more so a case study to see how Brazil 2002 could be replicated in Brazil's current 2020 setup (and with a little FM holidaying: in World Cup 2022). Now, in case you missed it, there's been a bit of a global pandemic...meaning that International fixtures have been postponed over 2020. So my replication is actually based on the Brazil's victorious 2019 Copa América campaign on home soil.

In this tournament, coach Tite used a mixture of 4-3-3 and 4-2-3-1 formations as Brazil laboured in the Group Stages, before finding their feet with the 4-2-3-1 against Argentina in the Semi Final. This is the game I am basing my tactical replication on. It's by no means a classical Brazilian samba side (see 1970), but it's situation mirrors the 2002 side somewhat. Both teams' captains were right sided marauding wing backs (Cafu and Dani Alves)...and the midfield base had two guys (Gilberto Silva/Kléberon & Casemiro/Arthur) who were not afraid to add simplicity and caution to their games. But most importantly, both sides won international honours without playing typically 'samba football'...they got the job done with individual flair, team ethic and a bit of fight. To quote a famous Brazilian expression: **'A hora da onça beber água' / The jaguar drinks water.** In both tournaments, Brazil got the job done when it mattered most...they were jaguars drinking the water.

So, let's start with the similarities of both sides, before moving on to the biggest differences. I'll then be contemplating what I

need to change in order to move from 3-4-1-2 to 4-2-3-1.

Similarities

- Wing Backs: Comparable Complete Wing Backs, with the 2002 side stronger with a peak Roberto Carlos. But there isn't much in it between Cafu and Alves for me.
- Central pivot: Two mentally strong readers of the game in front of the defence: Gilberto Silva/Kléberon & Casemiro/Arthur.
- Passing into space: Both sides unafraid to play expansive/direct football when it needed to.

Differences

- Defence: 2002 Brazil played with three central defenders, with Lúcio and Edmílson's athleticism alongside Roque Júnior's no nonsense defending.
- Attack: This back three allowed the world class 2002 Wing Backs the freedom to push forward and enable Ronaldinho and Rivaldo to link up closely with Ronaldo centrally. Whereas, Roberto Firminio is a more fluid central striker who will, more often than not, be drifting into the channels and swapping his position with Gabriel Jesus: a central striker being played out wide on the right.
- Fluidity: It may or may not surprise readers, but Scolari's tactical approach wasn't to a samba rhythm. It was structured, with tougher players and success relied more on the brilliance of individuals to create chances.

Perhaps it's the global shift in technical dominance post-Pep Guardiola's all conquering Barcelona, Brazil 2020 appears to

be a more fluid unit. With Coutinho often dropping deep to create a central two with Arthur, who has moved more in advance of Casemiro...thus becoming a 4-1-4-1 at times.

3-4-1-2 to 4-2-3-1

- Goalkeeper: From Alisson Becker to Marcos seems a bit of a downgrade. In terms of duty, I think Marcos will be changing from a traditional Goalkeeper to a Sweeper 'Keeper. Becker's distribution during the Semi Final Vs Argentina often gave Brazil a counter attack opportunity.
- Defence: So the biggest structural change is the removal of one defender out of this team. It's quite subjective as to what I role profile the latest Brazilian centre back pairing: I've gone with a BPD-D and CD-D, reflecting Marquinhos ability with the ball alongside Thiago Silva.
- In terms of the Wingbacks, it's surprisingly comparable...and reinforces the traditional stereotype of the 'Brazilian Wing Back'. Both CWBs, one on support and another on attack.
- Midfield: The double pivot of Casemiro/Arthur can be mirrored fairly easily with Gilberto Silva/Kléberson. Gilberto was arguably one of the key reasons why Arsenal went unbeaten in the 2003/04 Premier League season, with his perfect screening and protection of his defenders behind him. He will have no trouble playing Casemiro's role as somebody who holds his position. Kléberson has more athleticism and can be the supportive guy to either cover Cafu's movement or link up with the glorious attack.
- Attack: Roque Júnior at CB was typically unglamorous alongside Edmílson and

Lúcio, despite being key during 2002 he does not fit into the modern style of play... so he does not feature in favour of an attacking player in order to fit a 4-2-3-1.

- In comes Denílson to add a bit of width on the left (a la David Neres), but here comes the headache: who becomes to the No.10 playmaker behind R9 (who can never be moved away from a ST position)? I opted for Ronaldinho in the end, with Rivaldo cutting in and doing the Gabriel Jesus Inside Forward role from the right. There's also Kaká, who patiently waits from the bench with squad number 23.

The Tactic

Roles

So, this is what I consider to be the 2002 World Cup winning Brazil team playing in the modern day Seleção setup. It's always challenging to define some roles and replicate in Football Manager because players and teams don't always play the same way throughout a 90 minutes. One such example is Coutinho at AMC, who I previously mentioned sometimes drops deep in line with the more supportive central midfielder. Whereas in other moments, he is drifting wide left and alternating with Neres.

The 4-2-3-1 has a variety in attack and I have mixed around the Supportive and Attacking mentalities in the side, which makes the system more unpredictable in attack but also balanced when out of possession. For instance, Rivaldo in the Inside Forward role will not do much defensive work at all...he is well advanced of play and on an attacking mentality making him quite selfish and one-tracked minded.



Brazil 2019

He will be looking to get up alongside Ronaldo and be a goal threat. This mirrors Gabriel Jesus' real-life Seleção involvement, who looks to make direct runs into the box from wide right. This means you really need a Dani Alves (or now Cafu), to curb their attacking instincts a bit more...so I have placed my RB on Support.

I won't break down every role down, but here is my thinking on a few combinations:

"The pivot" – it's a very Brazilian centrally with the Segundo Volante role. This role will need good quickness (Acceleration & Pace) and a solid set of Mental attributes to know when to move and carry the ball forward and support attacks...but also do solid defensive

work. With a runner, you always need a holder. The shield (Gilberto) will be an anchor, holding position in front of the defence and playing a simple game. Like his role in the Arsenal Invincibles, I'm hoping his quiet exploits will allow everything else ahead of him to flourish.

"The Fantastic Four" – I'm overlooking Rivaldo's rawness at AMR, and hoping his ridiculous Acceleration & Pace (both 19) and 17 Off The Ball combined with his dominant left foot suits the Inside Forward Gabriel Jesus role. Denílson on the left wide as a Winger gives the attack some width and options for both Ronaldinho 'in the hole' and supply to R9 as our Attacking Deep Lying Forward.

Team Mentality

We're already an attacking formation, with 4 attackers, and have several Attacking/Positive mentalities placed on roles; I am therefore more inclined to start games on a Balanced mentality and see how we go. Our automatic team fluidity sets itself to be flexible, meaning that we are neither forcing the players to be closer together or further apart.

Team Instructions

There isn't much in the way of Team Instructions, just a few to mainly alter the team's behaviour as a unit:

Run At Defence – The Fantastic 4 have an average of 16 Dribbling, with the CWBs not far behind either. This team is made to dribble and both 2002 and 2020 have this distinctively inherent trait in their psyche. This will increase the chances of winning a penalty with our high Dribbling and Flair attributes.

Counter – We definitely have the players to make an immediate and devastating counter.

Counter-Press – The latest Brazil side isn't afraid to get physical and press, but this was particularly heightened in the crunch Argentina Semi Final. Luckily, the 2002 wasn't a soft side either. Roberto Carlos and Cafu were not afraid to get dirty against the German Wing Backs of Torsten Frings and Marco Bode during the 2002 World Cup final.

Higher Defensive Line [optional] – I'd tweak this game-by-game, but in order to exert more pressure with the counter-press against weaker sides...you could raise your defensive line. This in turns move your line of engagement up slightly towards the opposition penalty area.

Pass Into Space [optional] – As previously mentioned, both Brazilian teams look to pass into space and make use of their athleticism. Despite this, I've only deemed it an optional TI and will look at add it when I see fit.

Distribute To Full-Backs [optional] – The GK will look to use the Full-Backs. There isn't much to say on this, but the CWBs we're using are God-tier...give them the ball and see what they can do.

Player Instructions

I tend not to include these in tactical breakdowns, as they are really dependant on the players at your disposal. For the 4-2-3-1, I have not got any on...but many players have Player Traits, kindly added by FM Adventure. I also feel they are not needed as we have an exceptionally talented set of dreamweavers. It does not feel right specifying their passing directness or forcing their movements: as these are players with exceptional Decisions, Off The Ball and Vision.

2022 World Cup

So, how did the 2002 boys like playing in the modern 4-2-3-1? Here's a brief overview of the events in the 2022 Qatar World Cup...

Group Stage



2022 World Cup Group H

Brazil 2-1 Mexico
Edmílson (51), Kaká (90+4) 

Brazil 5-0 DR Congo
Kléberson (3), Kaká (12, 45+3), Rivaldo (45), Lúcio (45+2) 

Brazil 3-0 Japan
Rivaldo (pen 20), Ronaldo (66), Kaká (89) 

We battered Mexico, but could not find our lethal touch. Instead relying on an Edmílson set piece header and a late, late Kaká goal to spare our blushes. Ronaldinho was largely ineffectual in the hole and missed a penalty too. He would be benched for the next match...

The 2nd group game against DR Congo was the medicine we needed. A brazen 1st half with Kaká starting from wide right as our Inside Forward and Rivaldo slotting into the central playmaker role. It was much better, and only a classic #MythMike stopping us adding to the rout in the 2nd half.

In the final game Vs Japan we rotated a lot, with Ronaldinho now back in at wide left as a Winger...(who was no longer on penalties). That task is now set to Rivaldo, who dispatched his penalty with ease. The other goals came from R9 and Kaká...the young attacker being the top scorer of the group stage with 4 goals.

Ronaldinho's first World Cup was ended early with a late injury, meaning he will miss the knockout rounds. A shame, but the Gods appear to have given the Midas touch to Kaká this time round. Everything he touched turns to gold. On to the knockouts...

Knockouts



2022 World Cup Knockout Stages

Brazil 3-2 Uruguay [2nd Round]
Kaká (14, 20), Ronaldo (54) 

Brazil 4-1 Turkey [Quarter Final]
Ronaldo (10, 37), Rivaldo (pen 14, 56) 

Brazil 0-1 Italy [Semi Final] 

Brazil 2-0 Switzerland [3rd Place Playoff]
Ronaldo (13), Rivaldo (17) 

Leagues, Tactics, Training, Analysis.. Everything FM

Group G Runners Up, Uruguay, would be our first taste of the knockout rounds...for what is known as 'El Clásico del Río Negro'. Brazil were in full control with two first half replica goals...with Denílson providing two teasing crosses for the Inside Forward Kaká to convert. R9 got the scrappy third before we saw Uruguay mount a late rally. But in all honesty, Brazil were comfortable and in full control.

Up next in the Quarters was Turkey...a chance to re-experience Rivaldo's notorious exploits of 2002's opening Group C game? You bet: two goals from the Barcelona man...including another penalty, our third of the tournament, showing that Run At Defence was clearly working and causing problems for the AI! The goal of the tie though came from Ronaldo...who clinically finished Denílson's fine run and cut back. 4-1 in the end and we'd hit 15 goals already, now the small task of Italy in the Semi Final.

But Italy is where our journey would end...with a 35-year-old Leonardo Bonucci organising a rock solid defence against my attack. A typically Italian masterclass of stalwart defending and clinical finishing: a 1st half long strike from their Mezzala, Nicolò Barella. Italy 1-0 Brazil. 'If I could go back

and play that game again, I'd probably have tried to tease Italy out of their low block a bit more...perhaps reducing our own lines, removing a counter press and being more patient with the ball. Team Instructions like Work The Ball Into The Box could have maybe been the difference and allowed us to find one or two golden moments to score.

The Brazilian Football Association allowed me to play out one last match before firing me, a 2-0 win Vs Switzerland with R9 and Rivaldo scoring. 3rd place is perhaps a bittersweet ending to this blog, but this was no means a 'hacktic'; rather a replication of the modern day 4-2-3-1. But there are still fond memories, from Kaká's arrival on to the World scene with a tournament high of 6 goals (equal with Kylian Mbappé), Denílson's marauding runs and seeing El Fenomeno in the virtual flesh once again.

A huge thanks must go to FM Adventure for this opportunity, his work behind the scenes for the database was meticulous and it's so enjoyable to see this team again. Both the 2002 Brazil save file (pre-tournament) and tactic are available to download from us, contact @LatteQuarterly or email lattequarterly@gmail.com for a download link.



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A Brazilian Reasons to Go

By FMSamo

FMAdventure and FMGrasshopper's Brazilian collaboration idea for this issue of Latte Quarterly inspired me. Aside from a very short, and unsuccessful, stint on the FM18 beta, I've never ventured out of Europe for a save on the game.

Why is that? I'm not quite sure. I'm not just going to dive in and start a new save. I'm going to look at some of the pros and cons, in my opinion anyway, of managing in one of South America's top league and best countries, the Brazilian Serie A.

League Structure

It could be Uruguay, with its three-pronged approach to a league structure. It could be Colombia with the Apertura and Clausura. It could be Argentina which can't seem to decide how it should be structured, it changes on a season-by-season basis. It's none of these. It's Brazil. It's a 20-team league which plays each other home and away. It's basically a European style league setup, that's a huge tick in my pro column.

Unique league structures appeal to so many. Quirky rules make for a challenging environment. They don't really appeal to me. I like the simplicity of playing your opponents home and away across the season and at the end of it the team at the top are the champions. In past editions of the game I've edited the Scottish league structure to remove the annoying split and I wouldn't touch a save in Belgium with a bargepole. I think this comes from growing up supporting a club that purely played in leagues like this (albeit it tends to be playing your opponents four times a season in the league) and the English Premier League talking itself up to be

the behemoth that it is on TV most of the time.

While the structure of the Serie A is a big attraction for me to head there for a future save, Brazil does have a negative around this, the State Championships. Each of the 26 states in the country have their own championship, which in most cases, if not all, actually precede the creation of the league system across the country due to its geographical size and historical economic issues.

Yes you get to face off against your rivals in additional matches, which I guess could be a blessing or a curse depending on how you get on, but you also have to face a lot of cannon fodder too. Again, this could be good because you get to win matches and rotate your squad, but when you've potentially got continental competition to contend with in the form of the Copa Libertadores or the Copa Sudamericana, you're playing a lot of matches. Like a lot, a lot. Have I mentioned the Copa do Brasil yet? That runs throughout the season too. I'm not sure I'm ready for

that kind of relentless run of playing multiple matches a week.

Qualifying for Continental Competition

In the 2019 Serie A season, 1st to 8th place qualified for the Copa America and 9th to 14th qualified for the Copa Sudamericana. Only the clubs in 15th and 16th didn't have anything happen to them come the end of the season as the bottom four were relegated down to Serie B. This gives you or I a massive opportunity to qualify for continental competition and compete for additional silverware.

Where's the struggle though? Where's the challenge? Battling to qualify for continental competition if you're a lesser side in the European leagues feels like a huge achievement. For me, finishing 14th out of 20 shouldn't be rewarded with a qualification spot for the Copa Sudamericana.

There's a Link

There's always a link. The first ever football match in Brazil was organised by a Scotsman. Thomas Donohue worked in a textile factory in Rio de Janeiro and his match was around six months before the previously thought first ever match, which was organised by Charles Miller. He's considered to be the father of football in Brazil and is of Scottish descent. Could I do my fellow countrymen proud and make my mark as a Scotsman in Brazil?

Talent

You don't really need me to tell you that Brazil has developed a collection of the greatest players to have played the game. Why would you not want to go to the source? Why would you not want to pick up the challenge to potentially bring through your own Pele? Your own Ronaldo? Your own

Ronaldinho?

There's already a host of talent across the clubs in the league that are tempting to manage. Gabriel Barbosa has excelled since returning to the country, Everton is a little bit older but just as good while you've got Kaio Jorge and Renyer at Santos who could be your forward line for an entirety of a 20-year save. Every club in the league has a talented player that you could build the rest of your team around.

I haven't even gotten on to newgens yet. As I said, the country is one of the big developers of talented players in world football. We're all Football Manager fans reading this, we've got plenty of examples from down the years of unreal young Brazilians that we've managed to snap up for our sides. The country has a high youth rating which means there's a chance that you'll continue the production line of talent.

On the flip side, there's something else we've all seen in our saves down the years. We've probably even done it ourselves in a lot of cases. These talented players could get snatched away from you by the top European sides, especially so in those early seasons of a save. While the Brazilian league is also quite strong in terms of finances, especially so at a number of the clubs, the lure of progressing their careers and testing themselves in Europe could be strong for some players. We've seen that happen time and time again over the years and Football Manager does try and reflect real life football as much as it possibly can.

Imagine you joined Santos and Kaio Jorge kicked up a fuss because you rejected a bid from PSG's mega-millions? Your idea to turn him into the next Neymar would fall flat on its face before it's even begun.

Club Choice

There are some incredible clubs in the Brazilian Serie A. Just looking at the list of most titles won you've got Palmeiras, Santos, Corinthians, São Paulo and Flamengo in the top five. The first four of those clubs all play in the São Paulo state too so there's plenty of tasty battles to have there with your rivals if you pick one of those clubs. The latter, Flamengo, are the current reigning Serie A and Copa Libertadores champions, plus they play in the Maracana. Imagine playing your regular season football in such an iconic stadium. The aforementioned Gabriel Barbosa and Bruno Henrique scored 46 goals between them in the league to fire them to the title. Can you get the best out of them too? Could I?

Gremio and Internacional battle it out in the Grenal derby. Both clubs sit a little lower down in the overall number of championships won in the country, but sit 4th and 5th respectively in the all-time Serie A table. Both clubs have had some incredible players down the years that could attract me to join them to try and replicate their successes. Ronaldinho jumps out from the Gremio side, while I associate Internacional with Andres D'Alessandro. I spent so much time trying to pry him away from the club on past editions of Football Manager. The European bias I have remembers him for his 13 game spell at Portsmouth, but he's had an incredible career in South America.

For the 2020 Serie A season you've also got Red Bull Bragantino added to the mix. This project hugely appeals to me, especially so

after my stints with Red Bull clubs back on FM17. I would love to get that club to a level where they're producing top talents, perfect for the Red Bull style of football.

To be a little bit cheeky and move away from the Serie A, Cruzeiro have just been relegated in the 2019 season. They sit on 4 title wins, 5 runners up slots and 2nd in the overall all-time table. How can that kind of club not jump out at you to want to get them promoted to the top tier again?

There's no negative here. There's so many superb clubs to pick from in Brazil. The case for a future save in the country is building...

In Summary

The structure of the league season attracts me, but the numerous additional matches in the state championships plus continental competition means there's no rest for the wicked in Brazil.

There doesn't seem to be much of a challenge to qualify for continental competition. Surely I could finish in the top 14 of a 20-team league?

There's so many reasons to pick a save in Brazil if you look at the players in the league and the clubs they play for. Stories to create in your head, legends to emulate, players to develop and there's always the potential for some tasty newgens. But will they get snatched away from me too soon?

I couldn't be the next Scotsman to be dubbed Brazil's footballing father could I? I guess time will tell.



Solving Strikers

By SoggPlaysFM

The Problem

In my third season with Defensor Sporting in Uruguay I noticed I was having some problems with my strikers. They weren't scoring. My team as a whole were scoring quite freely, but the men with the express job of finding the back of the net were coming up short.

One of my strikers, Owen Falconis started the season well with 10 goals in 19 (13 from the bench) appearances. But he had started to struggle towards the middle of the season and it had now been over 9 hours since his last goal. It gets worse for our other striker at the club, Pablo Lopez, who had scored just 1 goal in 20(7) appearances. And for him, the wait for a goal has been a long and tiresome one, having not scored in 16 matches.

So what's going on up top for our club? Where are the goals coming from? Are my tactics to blame (almost always, yes)? Are the strikers contributing in other ways?

Well, grab a coffee and join me as we dive deep into the stats and figures and figure out what is happening with my strikers.

The Situation

We are actually performing quite well, and scoring goals hasn't been an issue for the squad as a whole, just the strikers. We finished 3rd in the opening stage of the 2022 season with 26 goals from our 15 matches.

In the Copa Libertadores we scored 13 goals

in our 6 qualification matches, and then went on to top our group (consisting of Santos, Banfield and Alianza) with 9 goals in our six matches including a surprising 5-1 win away at Santos.

The goals have dried up from the end of the opening stage and throughout the Intermedio after a soul crushing 3-0 defeat to Nacional.

At the time of writing I had one game left to finish the Intermedio stage (a mid season group competition) and have scored 7 in 6 matches, but have failed to score in 4 of those games.

This lack of goals, particularly for my strikers led me to take a better look at the players themselves, their form and my tactical choices.

The Strikers

Pablo Lopez

The 25 year old striker has been at Defensor his entire career and has never really had a good season. I'm about at my limit with him this season as he just continues to disappoint in front of goal. but am I being too harsh? Do I need to change up his role or train him in some certain skills to get him firing?

Looking at his attributes I can see that Lopez's technical skills are pretty good. The biggest flaw is his finishing of only 10. that's probably not good enough for a first team striker, but he should still be able to score.

His first touch (15), heading (15), dribbling (15) and technique (15) are all quite impressive and should make him a handful in the box especially from crosses into the area, which our team does quite a lot. His mental attributes might give us more of a clue as to why he is struggling to find the net.

Mentally, Lopez is a mixed bag. He's determined (14), has flair for days (16), and his off the ball (14) attribute that describes his ability to get into good positions to receive passes is quite high. But what concerns me here is his composure (7), concentration (9) and decisions (9).

Composure and decisions are all about what the player does with the ball. Low composure means that Lopez doesn't have a good steadiness of mind to make good decisions when he has the ball. Strikers need to be composed to coolly finish the chances that come their way.

This could be the issue for Pablo. Even though he has the talent and ability to get into good positions, and the technique to do something special, when it comes down to the crunch moments in a game, he lacks the composure to finish the job.

When looking at Lopez's statistics it doesn't look good. 1 goal, which came in a qualifying game for the Copa Libertadores, and was a tap in from a long throw routine, and 2 assists which both came in the same game is a poor return.

His shots on target ratio is pretty poor at 53%. And when looking at his shooting stats from the opening stage of the Uruguayan First Division, I'm worried that he's just not getting the ball enough in good positions, as in 12 appearances (3 from the bench) he only managed a total of 12 shots. At this point, I'm

thinking that it could be a product of our formation and the role used for the striker.

Pablo has mostly been deployed as a false 9 in our 4-2-3-1 system with a second striker or attacking midfielder behind him. Naturally this means he's not in the box as much which could be playing a big part in him not getting opportunities to score. Although his few games played as an Advanced forward haven't seen him score goals either. I might need to tweak our tactics and the role used up front.

Let's take a deep look at our other striker, Owen Falconis, and see if we find similar results.

Owen Falconis

The 22 year old striker has also been at Defensor his entire career and has shown some real promise. I think he's ready to be our number one striker after scoring from the bench on quite a few occasions for me, but when I hand him a starting spot he rarely produces. Is he to stay a super-sub for the club or does he have the bottle to succeed?

Looking at his attributes there isn't too much difference to Lopez. Dribbling (14), first touch (14), heading (14) and technique (14) all stand out for him in his technical attributes. However, finishing of 11, although better than Lopez, doesn't set the world alight.

Mentally he has the off the ball of Lopez (15), but exceeds his team mate in composure (14) and decisions (12). His positioning (7) could be better, but he has most of the mental attributes I want from a striker. Physically he has enough pace and acceleration to be useful (both 13) and has enough strength to be competitive in the box.

Falconis' stats tell a better story than Lopez overall. 10 goals from 19 appearances (13 of those as a substitute) is actually quite impressive and he has also chipped in with 2 assists. But when looking at his form, it's a different story. The goals have dried up and it's been 7 games since he found the back of the net, and before that goal, it had been another 7 appearances in-between drinks. What's more is 4 of his goals came in one

appearance against Danubio in a 5-1 demolition.

So after a good patch, things have changed. When taking a look at the role he was playing in when he scored these goals, 5 (including the 4 goals against Danubio) were scored as an advanced forward, and 3 have come as a False 9. So Having assessed both players, it was time to turn to my tactics to see if I was causing this problem.

The Tactic

In most matches this season we have played our number one tactic, 4-2-3-1.



The variations come from:

- the CM role sometimes being a Mezzala on attack or as a CM on attack, although lately I've reverted to a more subdued support duty.
- The right winger becoming an Inverted Winger on attack
- The Central Attacking Midfielder has more often been a Shadow Striker
- And the Forward has been changed to an Advanced forward

We dominate possession in our games with an average of 59% and have created the most chances in the league with 61 chances from 21 matches, sitting 3rd in the overall scorers table with 32 (one behind Nacional and 6 behind Peñarol).

What also stands out is our position as number 1 for cross completion. This could be our best way to goal.

The rest of the squad have contributed to goals, mostly coming from our wingers, Alan Rodriguez (4), Laquintana (4) and Marin (5) and from our Centre-Backs from our Set Piece routines, Cayetano (4), Ale (4) and Emeliano Alvarez (3) and lastly our captain and penalty taker Rabuñal (6).

And so, although Falconis sits at the top of our scoring stats, I think we really need to assess the role we're using for our lone striker to get more consistent goals up top.

Striking Roles

We dominate games, we create a lot of chances and have the best cross completion in the competition. Both Lopez and Falconis have good Heading attributes (Lopez 15 and Falconis 14).

The three roles that stand out to me for

fitting our tactic and strikers are the Target Man, the Poacher and the Complete Forward.

The Target Man

Positives of this role:

- + Relies on good service, which we have.
- + Needs aerial presence which our strikers have, somewhat.
- + Brings others into play, which suits having a shadow striker joining the box or opposite sided wingers.

Negatives of this role:

- Requires strength, which Falconis does ok (12) but Lopez scores poorly (6).
- Could be a little isolated in a one striker formation.

The Poacher

Positives for this role:

- + Focused on scoring.
- + We have good creative players who can create opportunities.
- + Both our strikers have good Off The Ball attributes to get in good positions.

Negatives of this role:

- Composure needed, which is particularly lacking in Lopez's game.
- Sitting on the shoulder of the last defender could lead to this player being lost in a sea of defenders as teams tend to sit deep against us.

The Complete Forward

Positives of this role:

- + Combining the poacher and target man into a goal scoring force could be the perfect outcome.

+ Suits a system where we dominate matches.

Negatives for this role:

- A complete forward needs to have good attributes all over, and I'm just not sure if we have that quality.
- The tendency to drop a little deep to join the build up could still leave us with no real striker.

The Decision

After thinking about all of the details, I've decided to make Owen Falconis lead the line as a poacher. His attributes make him a good fit there. In the end he's not really complete enough to or comfortable enough to play as a complete forward, and with a creative team around him, we don't need him to contribute to the build up all that much. I just want him to score goals.

Along with this, I decided to tweak our Attacking Midfielder in the CAM strata and make Luciano Boggio play as a Shadow Striker. With crosses into the box being effective and a poacher playing high up, it will leave some room behind for a shadow striker to move into.

Boggio is by far our best player at the club and has the ability to be a real goal threat. At 23, he has Dribbling (13) finishing (11) Technique (14) attributes. Mentally he also possesses good off the ball (13) and Decisions (15). Adding a pseudo second striker to our

formation might be key.

The Results

11 minutes into our next game, Owen Falconis scored. Hallelujah. However things tailed off again, and with some injuries interspersed throughout the closing stage of the season, Falconis would go on to score 3 goals and provide 1 assist playing as a Poacher. Not quite the transformation I was hoping for.

Lopez would not make another appearance in the season. I had lost faith with him and in my mind had resigned to transfer listing him. This also happened to coincide with the arrival of a Brazilian striker, Serginho. But he also would only score 2 goals and provide no assists.

But our tactical tweaks did bring our shadow striker, Luciano Boggio to the fore, scoring 5 and creating 4 in the closing stage. Alan Rodriguez would go on to score another 4, and a number of other players would continue to add the odd goal here and there.

While I didn't quite solve my striker issues in the way I had initially hoped, I unlocked the rest of the team and mounted a serious challenge for the closing stage title. My strikers create the space for other players to sneak into the area and score.

The solution might not always be where you first thought, so be creative. I hope this encourages you to tinker and think about your tactics.

Siempre Violeta

SOGGFM #SOGGSFMBLOGS



My Marriage with Football Manager

By Jamie Tarrant

Let's jump straight into the beginning, shall we? It was Christmas Day 2003 and I excitedly went downstairs at the age of 13 to see what was under the tree. My love for football was known to everyone, especially my grandmother. I assumed to be opening an object shaped as a DVD. "Football's Greatest Gaffes" was the obvious guess.

But no, it was a game called Championship Manager. The 2003/04 season edition. My grandmother was an instant legend. And from that moment my life changed forever.

A football manager simulator you say? Amazing. I could pick my team Manchester United. I could sign who I wanted, sell who I wanted, pick the tactics and watch on with delight as the goals fly in and the trophy cabinet grow ever bigger.

I'd played LMA Manager on the PlayStation before but that was nowhere near as in depth as what Eidos and Sports Interactive had created. This was something else altogether.

Watching that little yellow circle glide across the screen was all I did for months. Cherno Samba fired in the goals, Matteo Ferrari shepherded the defence, it was the most exciting time of my life. I'd go to school and sketch formations on the pages of my Science book in class. I'd make a shortlist of players I wanted to sign.

Soon after my friends joined in and it's all we would talk about on the playground. It

was a craze that overtook everything for so many people. We all looked forward to suggesting players to one another and if someone was on a bad run we'd all put our heads together in the hope we could give the correct advice.

The game had taken over my life with in an instant. I'd be on the computer all the time. My Saturday & Sunday would see me go from playing football in the street or in the parks with friends and neighbours to sitting upright in my family's living room watching that yellow ball of untold joy. My brother threw a spanner in the works however and eventually started playing it also and we'd then fight over who would play at what time and for how long.

As the months rolled by the next instalment arrived. Miles Jacobson and Sports Interactive formed the new Football Manager franchise. The old Championship Manager continued but not for long. It was abysmal. I still remember to this day when I first played it (it was then called Championship Manager 5) and Gary Neville of all people scored four goals in a pre-season friendly. My taste for it ended immediately.

Football Manager 2005 though was a thing of beauty. A sleek skin. More new features than you could believe. The excitement grew once come and many hours were again lost in the virtual world of being the manager of a football club.

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It was by this time I'd ended up on the forums. Sortitoutsi was the one I frequented most. I wrote stories on there. Actual news articles featuring transfers and match reports of a save I was playing at the time. I edited the photos for it, everything was from scratch. It was my new hobby that went with my main hobby. I believe I put more effort and passion into the game than I did any of my schoolwork.

Whilst on the forum I began making face packs and logos to insert into the game to give it an extra edge of realism. In 2007 they ran an awards section and I won Member & Writer of the Year. I was so proud sitting there waiting for the winners to be announced. I was chuffed when my name 'Tarrantino' was announced not once but twice! I genuinely felt like I'd achieved something and it was truly great to be recognised.

The Football Manager community is something I still visit to this day. There are familiar faces and names that I remember from years gone by. Nostalgia sweeps me away every time. I still every now and again do some write ups of my games. It keeps the creative juices flowing in the brain and lets you escape from the realms of reality and delve deep into the uncharted territories of the world that is Football Manager.

Over the years the game continued to improve and expand. The 3D match system was introduced in Football Manager 2009

and its been getting slicker ever since. To go from a 2D match engine to 3D was huge and it's possibly the biggest selling point of any football simulation game.

To physically see your players running up and down that field, missing an easy chance, making a clumsy tackle. Losing your cool is easy in those moments. Just as a manager in real life standing on the touchline would do. You become Jose Mourinho when things don't go your way, you feel betrayed by life. You see yourself as Antonio Conte losing his mind when the net is found. It all feels real to you.

I wonder every year how they come up with new ideas to improve it further, any new factors to add and thankfully with the game in real life forever changing they find it so simple. VAR has been added for example. New rules within FIFA's laws for work permits another example. Miles Jacobson and his team think of everything. They never miss a trick.

I'm 30 years old now and I'm still playing it!

It's been 17 years since this connection began and it's still strong. I'd love to believe that I'll still be playing by the time Football Manager 2050 rolls around. If someone asked me if I would be I would say 'yes' without hesitation. It's ingrained into my life. It would need to be surgically removed that's for sure.

The game is part of my life. It was a marriage made in heaven.



Leagues, Analysis, Tactics, Training...Everything FM

Latte Quarterly is collated, edited and published by **FMSamo**, **fmadventure**, **FMGrasshopper** and **AccordingtoFM**, but we will happily open our inbox to considering submissions from the wider community.

We invite articles of serious analysis, tactical discussion, guides, hints and tips or even tongue in cheek humour.

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